

VZCZCXRO8310
PP RUEHDBU RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHNP RUEHROV RUEHSL RUEHSR
DE RUEHVB #0054/01 0261424
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 261424Z JAN 10
FM AMEMBASSY ZAGREB
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9849
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ZAGREB 000054

SIPDIS

PLEASE PASS TO EUR/SCE AND EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2020

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HR](#) [BK](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: CROATIAN MFA ON TRILATERAL TALKS ON BOSNIA AND
CHANGES TO CROATIAN RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

Classified By: PolOff Peter D'Amico, Reasons 1.4 B/D

¶1. (SBU) Summary. According to Croatian MFA readout of the January 14 trilateral meeting between Croatia, Turkey and Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), the GoC sought to improve political protection for the Bosnian Croats in the Federation. The GoC believes that relaxing tensions between the Croat and Bosniak communities in BiH is key to countering Republika Srpska (RS) PM Milorad Dodik's influence. The Turkish side focused primarily on showing support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of BiH as well as its Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The Croatian MFA also briefed post on the reaction of the Bosnian Croat community to the GoC's proposed legal changes which would forbid Croatian citizens from claiming residency in two different locations. End Summary.

Trilateral Talks

¶2. (C) Dunja Jevak, Director of the BiH Desk at the MFA, provided poloff with a readout of the trilateral foreign ministers level meeting between Croatia, Turkey and BiH held on January 14 in Zagreb. Jevak noted that the GoC intended to use the trilateral meeting to improve the situation of the Bosnian Croats in the Federation. The GoC believed that reforms to the rules of procedure in the Federation could give the Bosnian Croats there a greater voice. The GoC would like the Croats in the Federation to enjoy powers similar to those provided by the structure that existed on the national level in the Council of Ministers in BiH. This would allow the Bosnian Croats to veto decisions that could impact their vital interests. The GoC believed this was a useful discussion for the trilateral format since the GoT has influence over Bosniak leaders in the Federation, and changes to the rules of procedure would not require constitutional reform, which would be more difficult to achieve.

¶3. (C) Jevak expressed concern over tensions between the Croat and Bosniak communities in the Federation, arguing that RS PM Dodik was exploiting those tensions to divide them and further his own agenda. Jevak claimed that Dodik increased his standing among both the Serb and Croat communities in BiH by stating that he would not allow Serbs in the RS to be "dominated" by the Bosniaks the way Croats are in the Federation. Jevak said that giving Croats in the Federation a greater voice would undercut Dodik's position.

¶4. (C) Jevak said that the Turkish government had been primarily focused on showing strong support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of BiH, as well as its Euro-Atlantic aspirations, both of which the GoC also backs. The GoT circulated the draft of a declaration on BiH to be released at a future meeting of the South East Europe Cooperation Process (SEECp) at the political directors level. Jevak said that the GoT did not raise the possibility of a future quadrilateral meeting in Istanbul with BiH, Croatia, Serbia and Turkey. In a separate conversation, MFA State Secretary Davor Bozinovic told the Ambassador on January 20 that when FM Jandrokovic mentioned the possibility of such a

meeting, Turkish FM Ahmet Davutoglu did not respond. As for the trilateral meeting between Serbia, Turkey and BiH in Belgrade, Jevak said as far as she was aware, the focus was on concrete issues such as the GoS's rejection of the last three individuals appointed to be the BiH ambassador to Serbia.

Double Residency

15. (C) Turning to relations between Croatia and the Bosnian Croat community, Jevak expressed surprise at the strong negative reaction of the Bosnian Croats to the GoC's recently proposed changes in Croatian law which would forbid citizens from claiming residency in two different locations. (Note: The vast majority of Bosnian Croats have Croatian citizenship, and many are reportedly registered at addresses in both Croatia and BiH. End Note.) Required as part of the EU accession process, this legal change has been pending for years. Jevak emphasized that it would not impact the citizenship rights of individuals, although there would likely be some implications for certain benefits, such as health insurance: Bosnian Croats would have to select between the Croatian system or one in BiH based on their chosen residency. Additionally, they would have to start paying taxes on their second home. She also noted that this change was not planned to apply to returnees or refugees so; for example, Serbs who fled Croatia and lived in the RS should not be affected.

Comment

16. (C) The GoC does not view trilateral or quadrilateral

ZAGREB 00000054 002 OF 002

talks including Turkey as an alternative to the Butmir process. While the GoC sees Turkey as a good and long-standing ally of Croatia, it recognizes the limits of what can be achieved by the GoT in BiH. Zagreb appears mostly interested in using the trilateral talks to try to gain some traction on efforts to further secure the political role of Croats in the Federation. By doing so, the GoC hopes in part to counteract worries among their kinsmen in BiH that Zagreb is preparing to "abandon" them, fears that have been heightened by the pending changes to the Croatian law on residency.

FOLEY